The Ethics Unwrapped “Giving Voice To Values” Video Series

The Giving Voice To Values (GVV) video series summarizes the introductory points of Giving Voice to Values: How To Speak Your Mind When You Know What's Right, developed by Mary C. Gentile with support from the Aspen Institute and the Yale School of Management.

The GVV videos can be watched individually or collectively, although they will be most useful if used together and viewed with the introductory video. This series can serve as a springboard for further classroom discussion of ethics and values as they pertain to students’ personal and professional lives.

Although GVV was created for business ethics programs, the lessons in GVV are broad and applicable to a variety of fields including education, fine arts, liberal arts, communication studies, engineering and the sciences, and professional schools. GVV case studies, curriculum and teaching pedagogy are available at http://www.babson.edu/academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/home.aspx

The G.V.V. Approach

Giving Voice to Values (GVV) is an innovative approach to values-driven leadership development. GVV identifies the many ways that individuals can – and do – voice their values in the workplace and provides opportunities to build the “moral muscles” necessary to do so.

Most people want to bring their whole selves to work. Yet, experience and research demonstrate that values conflicts will occur during the course of a person’s life and career – those times when what we believe and want to accomplish seem to be in opposition to the demands of others, including peers, supervisors, organizations, etc. The GVV curriculum helps people build and practice the skills individuals need to recognize, speak and act on their values when these conflicts arise.

GVV identifies and builds upon SEVEN PILLARS or principles that represent ways of thinking about values and our own capabilities and identities in order to enhance our ability to voice and enact our values effectively. The SEVEN PILLARS are: Values, Choice, Normalization, Purpose, Self-Knowledge & Alignment, Voice, and Reasons & Rationalizations. Each video in this series introduces a GVV PILLAR.
The GVV approach includes:

* A focus on how a leader or manager raises values-based issues in an effective manner—what he/she needs to do to be heard and how to correct an existing course of action when necessary;

* Positive examples of times when people have found ways to voice and thereby implement their values in the workplace;

* An emphasis upon self-assessment and a focus on individual strengths when looking for a way to align one’s individual sense of purpose with that of the organization;

* Opportunities to construct and practice responses to frequently heard reasons and rationalizations for not acting on one’s values;

* Practice in providing peer feedback and coaching.

**G.V.V. Video: Pillar 3 – Normalization**

Mary Gentile argues that it is possible to deal with values conflicts that arise in our lives and in our careers more skillfully and more confidently by recognizing in advance that such values conflicts are a normal part of business and of life. Rehearsing difficult situations or conversations, which are an everyday part of work and of living, can make values conflicts easier to resolve in a productive and professional way even if you are concerned about possible impacts on your job or an important relationship.
Discussion questions: G.V.V. Pillar 3 - Normalization

1. BEFORE viewing the video, you may wish to poll students with the following questions:

   - When it comes to values conflicts, they are often unexpected and catch me by surprise.
     Strongly Agree  Somewhat Agree  Not Sure  Somewhat Disagree  Strongly Disagree

   - They get in the way of getting my real work done.
     Strongly Agree  Somewhat Agree  Not Sure  Somewhat Disagree  Strongly Disagree

   - They are everyday occurrences and they don’t bother me much because I know how to handle them.
     Strongly Agree  Somewhat Agree  Not Sure  Somewhat Disagree  Strongly Disagree

   - I try to rush through them so I can get back to work, meetings, studying, etc.
     Strongly Agree  Somewhat Agree  Not Sure  Somewhat Disagree  Strongly Disagree

2. AFTER viewing the video, you may wish to re-visit the polling questions above and discuss whether participants have any new insights.

3. What are some of the predictable kinds of ethical challenges you face in your daily life (at school, in work, etc.)? By anticipating them, can you reduce some of their emotional power to catch you off guard, and thereby expand your access to real choices and your ability to handle them calmly?

4. Have you ever spent time, before a challenge arises, alone or preferably in collaboration with your peers, trying to figure out how you might effectively enact your own values in such instances?

5. Which are the most frequent and most important of these situations that you encounter. Have you ever seen anyone (or yourself) address them effectively? In small groups, think about how you might effectively act on your values in these situations.
**Additional G.V.V. Resources**

http://www.givingvoicetovaluesthebook.com/

For a discussion of the “Normalization” pillar, see Chapter Four of *Giving Voice To Values*, “It’s Only Normal.”

For a discussion of the “GVV Starting Assumptions,” see Chapter One of *Giving Voice to Values*, “Giving Voice to Our Values: The Thought Experiment.”

For a summary of the Giving Voice To Values Seven Pillars download *An Action Framework for Giving Voice To Values— “The To-Do List.”*
http://www.babson.edu/Academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/curriculum.aspx

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**Transcript of Narration**

Written and Narrated by Mary C. Gentile

Too often we tend to think of values conflicts or ethical challenges as aberrations – the exceptional situation that we hope we never have to encounter. This way of thinking can leave us unprepared and overly emotional when the conflict actually presents itself. We might for example just freeze – like a deer in headlights – when someone asks us to lie or cheat; Being unprepared, we are more likely to just give in, with the hope that we don’t get caught and never have to face the situation again.

If we recognize that values conflicts are a normal and predictable part of business – and of life – we are more likely to be able to calmly anticipate and prepare ourselves for the kinds of challenges that we are likely to encounter.
The kinds of values conflicts we may face can often be anticipated depending on what we do – work, school, sports, friendships, family, etc. At school, we might be asked to cheat. On a sports team, we may be pressured to cover up the rule violations of a fellow teammate. In business, we may be pressured to tamper with the financial reports or to lie about a product’s true capabilities; and so on.

The reasons that people use for making unethical requests are pretty predictable and so there is an opportunity to think them through in advance and to consider what might be a credible response. Then we can literally rehearse or practice our response so we feel ready when the situation arises.

Too often we tend to assume that ethical conflicts require us to stamp our foot and shake our fist and “speak truth to power” in an emotional or even accusatory way. But actually, if we can remain calm, avoid over-reaction, and prepare ourselves to make reasonable and helpful responses to these situations, we are more likely to both find the confidence to remain true to our values and also a way to influence others without shaming or blaming them.

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This material is based upon the Giving Voice To Values curriculum (www.GivingVoiceToValues.org). The Aspen Institute was founding partner, along with the Yale School of Management, and incubator for Giving Voice To Values (GVV). Now based and supported at Babson College.

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